

2024: The K'Thonn Colony Wars

The colonial period of the Hierarchy first began roughly in the year 2000. Expeditions from diverse backgrounds headed out to the many recesses of the K'Thonn system in search of a better life for themselves and their families. Many were societal outcasts, but many more were opportunists and entrepreneurs looking for power among the untamed terrain of foreign soil.

By 2015 roughly two dozen formal settlements were logged in the K'Thonn system. Over half of these colonies were nothing more than small remote outposts of only three to four hundred people, but three of the colonies in particular had grown into their own. Grath'Var, an inner planet one orbit beyond K'Thonn, became home to a bustling trade hub; Mahr'Dan became the seat for power in the gas giants; and Hkochdor had experienced a boom after rare elements and ore including Quantum 40 were found on the ice moon. These three colonies housed the majority of colony populations.

By the 2020s these colonies and the other emerging settlements in the outer systems began exerting their economic muscle. They increased the prices on their refined ores and specialty materials forcing the price on consumer commodities up by an average 15%. These profits were officially put into corporate and colonial government accounts, but things were happening transparently behind closed doors. The three major colonies of Grath'Var, Mahr'Dan, and Hkochdor--in association with some of the large up and coming colony worlds--formed a secret self-promoting alliance. Using their increased revenues the secret organization began financing new projects under false names and using their contacts to gather important data that could be of use to them. The overriding mandate of the organization was simple: to secure free autonomy and control of colonial territories and separate from K'Thonn and the Hierarchy.

Not many years before such talk would have been ludicrous. However, the larger colonies had a firmly entrenched local economy that could easily be retooled to war production, and the first dedicated shipyards were already nearing completion, thanks to the secret funds being funneled by the colonials into businesses acting as fronts for their efforts. New technologies and warship designs had even been conceived in secret, many of them stolen in part or whole from the Hierarchy's own current research and development networks through such methods as bribery or blackmail.

The Colonial Opposition was gaining momentum by 2024, with eight official "associate" colonies supporting the movement. The closed door meetings of the Inner-Circle began becoming more and more frequent as plans were made to accelerate the progress of their framework. This however would be their undoing.

While performing standard undercover surveillance for the Inner-Circle, one of the colonialists was discovered by members of the Emperor's elite guard and interrogated. After days of torture the colonial had given the Hierarchy more than enough knowledge to pursue further and more probing investigations. The Inner-Circle knew that they were getting too close for comfort and that there was no more time to wait; the matter had to be dealt with, and it had to be dealt with now.

So as the sun peaked past the horizon of Grath'Var's southernmost continental plateau, a group of six cargo ships pulled into a low orbit above the planetary military garrison outpost. The ships were warned off by the station, a group of Vysys cutters sent out to stare them down and escort them to the civilian starport. Just as the lead Vysys reached weapons range the cargo pods of the ships broke open, pieces of metal fluttering away from the hull forcibly. Then the reign of fire fell upon the military craft. What ensued was nothing less than slaughter, the six ships systematically striking every K'Thonn military vessel and outpost within the orbit of the planet.

Similar events were occurring throughout the colonies, with the unprepared military commanders being overwhelmed by surprised and sheer numbers of the cheap vessels. Within two days the colonials had pushed the influence of the K'Thonn Hierarchy all the way back to K'Thonn itself. All was safe and the war won, or so thought the Colonial Opposition. The Inner-Circle was naive enough to even send a message to the Emperor himself offering to discuss terms to end the conflict and deliver freedom to the colonies. This was not to happen.

Though the colonies had been preparing long and hard for their offensive, the K'Thonn had been readying themselves for their own planned liberation efforts. The losses taken during the first days of what would come to be known as the Colony Wars were expected. The military aristocracy had been appraised of this several months before due to reports of unexpected and "odd" fleet buildups by key

corporations, corporations that until a year or two before had zero assets and yet commanded small fortunes.

One week after the celebration parties on the colonies died down an armada fell upon Grath'Var. Dozens of carriers, patrol ships, and other light warships filled the skies. Hordes of fighters struck at what ships guarded the planet, easily picking them off or forcing them to retreat. The K'Thonn military was taken by surprise when they encountered a dozen hastily assembled OSAT's in orbit of Grath'Var, but none were in a complete enough state of construction to effectively defend themselves against the military forces. If the capture of Grath'Var by the colonials had been a massacre, the liberation of the planet was even more so. There was no liberation. The planet was bombed until every settlement was destroyed and the blood of every colonials ran in the streets. The K'Thonn did not even think of moving their forces onward from Grath'Var until all the pressurized domes and every detectable trace of life were wiped from the planet's surface.

The atrocities at Grath'Var stunned the rest of the colonies. The Inner-Circle was fractured, as ten of the twenty-eight representatives who comprised the council had died in the attack on Grath'Var. Without cohesion to keep the loose confederation of city-states together the entire mutual-defense network began to collapse. Though the founding colonies remained stolidly behind their cause, many of the smaller, long range colonies defected immediately, forcing the colonialists from the colonies and asking the defending craft to please leave (no shots were fired in any case during such incidents). In a month the Colonials would manage to once again regain consistency of action and be able to apply themselves to the crisis, but it was a one month window that they could not afford.

Astrahk was a minor colony located in the sparse K'Thonn asteroid belt. A home to miners hollowing out larger asteroids to eek out a living, the main colony wasn't much to speak of. It was, however, the K'Thonn Hierarchy's next step in their push forward into the heart of the colonies. Officially Astrahk had remained a member of the Hierarchy even after the Colonial Oppositions offensive. However, the K'Thonn knew that those living on Astrahk had "secretly" sold goods to the larger colonies that were used for their war productions. They knew this secret because of the fact that the accountant in charge of the colony's business logs so studiously noted as such on the financial paperwork directed to bureaucrats in the Hierarchy's administrative department. There would be no mercy. As the colony begged for their lives the guns of a dozen ships tore into the colony installation, melting it and killing every inhabitant of the colony. No ships came to the colony's defense.

Astrahk would not be the last planet to the slaughter of the scorched earth tactics of the K'Thonn Hierarchy. Several other small colonies were slaughtered outright, the unlucky survivors of the initial attacks paraded through city squares for public executions. All the events of the war were televised and beamed back to K'Thonn audiences on Homeworld.

Three months had passed since the offensive against the colony worlds had begun. The three bloody months had seen half the colonies either destroyed or "rejoin" the Hierarchy, usually after sustaining heavy civilian casualties from suppression bombardment. With the weaker back worlds dealt with, the Hierarchy turned its eyes to the longest range colony-- the research outpost of Dar'Vohk. The second to last planet in the K'Thonn system, Dar'Vohk was a barren world covered in a thick carbon/ice sheet. The world had little in the way of an atmosphere and supported at last estimate a population of barely 6,000. In Dar'Vohk, however, the Hierarchy encountered their first real intelligence lapse. Dar'Vohk had a population of nearly 18,000 and substantial subterranean industry, hidden from public eye and its existence was a closely guarded secret, one known to few outside of the Inner-Circle.

When the first jump points opened in orbit of Dar'Vohk on June 1, 2024, they were met by a ring of no less than fifty Class-III Agtat Orbital Defense Satellites. The monstrous defense net encircled the planet in a sphere of defense that the Hierarchy had not expected or even dreamed of. As each ship emerged from their swirling blue jump points they were shot down by the concentrated firepower of the OSATs. Carriers were the first to be targeted, most being destroyed before they could deliver an appreciable number of fighters into combat. The Dar'Vohk defense net had little in the way of supporting fire from starships, though a few lighter Var'Cha frigates aided in the defense, though all those participating were easily destroyed by the invading Hierarchy vessels. 15% of the Hierarchy forces survived long enough to flee beyond the OSAT's engagement range and jump out. The advanced technologies exhibited by the Opposition were also an alarming surprise to the Hierarchy, as it meant that their own R&D had been compromised further than they had previously believed. In one single stroke the dagger the Hierarchy offensive had been shattered, sending a much needed infusion of hope into hearts of the remaining colonies. All might not be lost after all...

With renewed vigor, the freedom fighters began raising their heads and peering out from their defended worlds trying to appraise the situation at hand. The remaining members of the Inner-Circle in concordance with representatives of each of the surviving separatist colonies assembled at Mahr'Dan to discuss the future. The Mahr'Dan gas giant system had become known as the Mahr'Dan Fortress, as all of the colonies had elected for secession at the same time the more influential Mahr'Dan had done so giving the area vital economic importance to the survival of the colonies. Mahr'Dan, too, was now the penultimate colony following Grath'Var's destruction. The council decided that it was important to strike now while the Hierarchy's forces were weakest and spread out. The colonial fleet had been whittled down greatly the last several months, many of their light vessels being gunned down maliciously by Hierarchy patrols. The losses far surpassed new constructions, as after the loss of Grath'Var all the surviving colonies capable of doing so had invested instead in orbital satellite systems for their own defense. This gave the Opposition a very limited base of hulls with which to plan their next moves. Two previously important and strategic locations--Grath'Var and Astrahk--had been utterly destroyed. Two other mid-range colonies had also been razed by the Hierarchy on their blood march through colonial territories. There existed, however, a pair of colonies on a moon of the fourth planet, Echvis, that supported a significant mining trade. Early on in the conflict the Echvian colonies had opted for secession, joining the other colonies in rising against the oppression of the Hierarchy. However, following the slaying of Grath'Var, the Echvians had reneged on their treaties to the Opposition and rejoined the Hierarchy. In exchange for bribes and secret documents the colonies had gotten off without major repercussions. That was to change. A strike force of twenty ships--all the Colonials could muster at this point and still maintain for their own defense--was dispatched to moon with a simple order: decimate the colony's economic worth.

The Hierarchy had Grath'Var, but the Colonials had Echvis. The massacre was short, and the inhabitants of the colony had hardly enough time to sound alarms before plasma started raining down at them from the skies. The light Hierarchy patrol force in the area was decimated in short order leaving the Colonials to their work.

Though the Opposition was invigorated by their few recent successes, their success only helped to stoke the flames of hatred that the Hierarchy held for the outer colonies. Homeworld had as of yet been unscathed, its guard stations and light orbital defense network shooting down any fool that dare get close to the planet--let alone attempt an assault. It was decided by the God-Emperor himself during a meeting of his generals that the final assault should be swift and decisive. The razing of colonies had not cowed the colonies, and the lack of the mineral wealth the colonials had held was starting to slow K'Thonn ship production. Thus, the Emperor decided that the Hierarchy should attack all of the surviving major colonies at once. A suicide attack, but with a deadly surprise: the introduction of a modified bombardment ship would turn the tide of battle. The mass driver equipped ships would be supported by surviving Hierarchy warships, their goal to survive just long enough to bomb the colonies 'back into the stone age', destroying atmospheric domes and leaving the inhabitants to die from exposure to the harsh environments in which they lived. Most of the generals did not believe it would work, but it was instituted nonetheless.

In the early dawn of December 18, 2024, the K'Thonn fleets struck at their targets. The fleets assaulting Mahr'Dan Fortress were killed the to the last ship, but not before a contingent of Nomath Bombardment Cruisers could destroy four of the colonies orbiting the gas giant. Hkochdor fared no better; the skeleton defense force and OSAT network fought bravely, but ultimately were destroyed. They did managed to destroy half of the invaders, however, including the pair of bombardment ships sent to dispatch the colony. Unfortunately, the principal city on the world was destroyed. To this day only craters signify the location of the fallen city. Three others colonies were also hit, but it was immaterial to the Opposition. They had lost. A large part of their fleets had been destroyed, and their most powerful colonies were destroyed. It took a week to finally deliver an unconditional surrender to the K'Thonn Hierarchy...

The wrath of the Hierarchy then fell upon the survivors. Those unlucky enough to not be killed in the initial bombardments at Mahr'Dan and Hkochdor were enslaved, shipped to the now barren and lifeless wastes of Grath'Var to work as hard labor in rebuilding the mining infrastructure of the planet. Most of the women and young girls that survived were taken as "war prizes" by the conquering soldiers, many higher ranking commanders accruing large sized harems in the process. Cruelty and death is all that those that lived on. The colonies that sided with the Hierarchy against the Opposition fared little better. Fearing another insurrection off world, the God-Emperor punished them nearly as severely in

order to "maintain order." What once was a strong and independent collection of worlds was now a broken husk, and the K'Thonn had resolved the bloodiest war in their history.